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SUBJECT: INL ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY NANCY POWELL - MAY
10-11 VISIT TO BUCHAREST

Summary

1. International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Acting Assistant Secretary Nancy Powell traveled to Bucharest May 10-11 for meetings at the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) Center and to discuss INL regional and bilateral programs and issues with key Romanian officials. Romanian President Traian Basescu underscored continued Romanian commitment to SECI Center and expressed strong appreciation for USG support over the years. Deputy Interior Minister Florin Sandu similarly emphasized the importance of SECI Center's regional role and the value of USG continued support of the work of SECI. End Summary.

SECI Welcomes AA/S Powell

2. SECI Center Acting Director General Alexandrou Ionas welcomed AA/S Powell May 10 on her first visit to SECI Center. SECI is a twelve member state organization, with police and customs representatives assigned from each. In addition to acting as an information sharing center on current cases, a series of operational task forces develop new cases in transborder crime. Ionas expressed firm appreciation for the support the U.S. had provided SECI over the years, including the recent funding of the financial crime task force. That task force had been dormant for several years and now is being reactivated with the assistance of the Secret Service and the Italian Financial Police and the posting of an INL officer at the Center to coordinate assistance funds.

3. In the overview of SECI programs, General Ionas detailed a recent case in which a Moldovan trafficking witness, who was forced to testify a second time by a Macedonian court, did so via video teleconferencing from Moldova. The equipment was purchased by the FBI liaison at SECI and was coordinated through the Macedonian and Moldovan officers posted to the SECI Center. This video testimony was the first of its kind in the region, supported by recently enacted laws in both Moldova and Macedonia which made the testimony possible by not requiring the victim to travel to the location of the court that is hearing the case. AA/S Powell congratulated the SECI Center on this operation and expressed her hope that future opportunities would allow this and other technological advances to be utilized in transborder crime issues.

4. AA/S Powell was also briefed on the possible role of SECI in a larger Black Sea Security Initiative and how that role could expand in cooperating with the Black Sea Economic Cooperative (BSEC) Organization. General Ionas pointed out that threats in the Black Sea region will come from non-state actors with associations to organized crime. He demonstrated that SECI is well equipped to assist in the fight against organized crime, not only in the Balkans but in the Black Sea region. He based that conclusion on the fact that a majority of SECI states are also members of BSEC, thereby facilitating cooperation between the two organizations.

5. AA/S Powell also received a detailed briefing on the work of the Southeast Europe Prosecutor's Advisory Group (SEEPAG) and how their work is directly linked with that of the SECI Center. Ionas concluded the briefing with a tour of the headquarters, which is located in a section of the Palace of the Parliament, which had been originally constructed by former dictator Nicolai Ceasescu.

6. In her comments, AA/S Powell praised the recent successes in human trafficking convictions and emphasized the importance of targeting human trafficking in the region, the reactivation of the financial crime task force, since this has proven to be an effective tool in combating organized crime, and the plans of involving SECI in the Black Sea Security Initiative. She further expressed her pleasure that SECI has done so much in the fight against transborder crime in only four years of operation. Finally, she said it was important for SECI to reach out to EU institutions as the date for EU accession approaches.

President Basescu: Thank You for Your Support

17. During the Southeast Europe Cooperative Process (SEEC) meeting being hosted in Bucharest, the heads of government of all Southeast European Countries took the time to visit the SECI Center on May 11. AA/S Powell had the opportunity to meet Romanian President Traian Basescu as well as Special Coordinator of Stability Pact (SCSP) Ehrhard Busek. She also exchanged greetings with UNMIK Deputy Special Representative of UN Secretary General (DSRSG) Larry Rossin, and spoke briefly with him about SECI's role in building stability in the region by targeting organized crime. In a brief exchange, Basescu thanked AA/S Powell for the firm support of the SECI Center and commented later to SECI Acting Director Ionas that US support is critical for SECI to build on its current successes such as the recent February arrests of human traffickers. Finally, Busek pointed out the importance of resources devoted to SECI to remain at SECI. He recognized the importance of other regional initiatives such as GUAM but argued they should not divert SECI resources.

Deputy Interior Minister Sandu Appreciative of INL Programs

18. In a meeting with Deputy Interior Minister Florin Sandu AA/S Powell was thanked for the INL bilateral programs initiated and coordinated through Post. Sandu emphasized the programs in anti-trafficking, cyber crime and anti-narcotics as examples of highly successful programs that have produced visible results. Additionally, the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) was cited as a vital program not only for Romania but for the entire region. Sandu pointed out that over two hundred Romanians have graduated from ILEA and AA/S Powell added that many of those two hundred Romanians graduated at the top of their class. Deputy Minister Sandu then thanked AA/S Powell for support and INL leadership with the SECI Center. He stated that SECI fills a gap in regional law enforcement which could not be filled by INTERPOL or EUROPOL. He added that he would like to see SECI's role expand to risk analysis in the transborder crime arena, going beyond these first steps of information sharing between police and customs officers in the region. He pointed out that SECI has the advantage of having customs as well as police assets. This he viewed as a force multiplier in combating fraud cases.

19. Acting Assistant Secretary Powell cleared this cable.

10. AmEmbassy Bucharest's Reporting telegrams, as well as daily press summaries, are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website: www.state.gov/gov/p/eur/bucharest.

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